

WASHINGTON – U.S. Senators Jeff Bingaman and Tom Udall, along with Representative Harry Teague, today pressed the Department of Homeland Security to step-up the Border Patrol's presence in New Mexico's boot heel. The area is about 10 miles from an Arizona ranch where a rancher was killed over the weekend.

But as drug trafficking gangs continue to threaten security in the U.S.-Mexico border region, the New Mexico lawmakers urged DHS to take further security steps. In a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, Bingaman, Udall and Teague urged the establishment of a Border Patrol forward operating base in the boot heel. Forward operating bases are outposts that allow agents to patrol closer to the international border.

Although the Border Patrol force strength is now at a record 20,000 agents and the apprehension rate along the southern border is at the lowest level since the 1970s, it is clear that more still needs to be done to fully secure our nation's borders. Just this last weekend, a rancher was murdered at his ranch in Arizona just across the New Mexico state line after he encountered a person on his property. While the specifics of this terrible incident are still being investigated, we are deeply concerned about the security threats border ranchers are facing and believe it is critical that DHS enhance its capabilities in this region.